

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo

October 14, 2011

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Other:

11. [Red Cross Instructor](#) training available for teachers, school nurses

Attachment to this field memo:

2011-2012 Instructor Training Program Registration Form

Action Item Calendar

Today! (October 14): School-prayer assurance due
October 21: Districts should determine best way to capture class rosters
October 24: Student enrollment and addresses due
October 27: School Safety and Mitigation Conference registration form due
October 31: Beginning teacher information due
November 1: Submission and snapshot reports due
November 15: Deadline for final selections of district teachers of the year
December 1: Districts verify all personnel assignments
December 1: For TCS, Districts should clarify model to determine “contributing educators”
June 30, 2012: Schools and districts submit final personnel assignments

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. Districts sought for participation in PISA test pilot

The overall vision developed in our strategic plan, *Transforming Education in Rhode Island*, is to prepare all students to succeed in an international, global economy. To reach this goal, we need to ensure that our students attain proficiency as measured against internationally benchmarked standards. As I traveled across the state last year for community forums in each school district, I showed slides indicating how students in the United States and in Rhode Island compared against the students around the world, as measured by the Programme for International Student

Assessment (PISA) and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). I had to use the NAEP results to measure our students against their peers around the globe because, as you may know, Rhode Island students have not participated in the PISA assessment. I'm excited to tell you about a special opportunity that we have for high schools in the state that would like to participate in the PISA-based Test for Schools pilot. Participation in the PISA would give us incredible information about student performance in our state as measured against the best students in the country and in the world. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which is developing the PISA-based Test for Schools, wants to see a variety of different schools to participate, including rural, suburban, and urban schools from all participating states. A Web site about this pilot test is up and running, and it includes FAQs and a brief video about the PISA. You can access the Web site here:

<http://www.schoolassessment.org/>

Please let me know if you are interested in participating in this exciting program. I hope for a large contingent of participants from Rhode Island.

2. Attorney General determines that student-performance data used in evaluations remains confidential

As you may have heard, the R.I. Attorney General recently issued an advisory opinion, determining that the aggregate performance data of students of an identified teacher that is used to evaluate the teacher is not subject to disclosure under the Rhode Island Public Records Act.

In a letter to Providence Superintendent Lusi in explanation of the Attorney General's opinion, Deputy Commissioner David V. Abbott:

The opinion is important to [RIDE] in two respects. First, it supports [our] view of the teachers' expectation of privacy under the law with regard to the content of their evaluations. Second, it will inform [our] work in developing and implementing a statewide instructional system that can be used by LEAs to improve student academic achievement.

I am extremely pleased with the Attorney General's ruling on this matter, and I believe this action will reassure some educators who may have had concerns that the evaluation system would unfairly target them or violate their right to privacy. I look forward to working with you and with all educators to make sure our evaluation system is fair and thoughtful and that it improves teaching and learning in all of our schools.

3. Reminder: Superintendents required to assure compliance with law on school prayer – *Action Item*

As required by federal law, I must receive from all LEAs a written statement of assurance that no policy of the LEA prevents, or otherwise denies, participation in constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary and secondary schools as detailed in the guidance. The guidance was published in the Federal Register on February 28, 2003, and is available at:

http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/religionandschools/prayer_guidance.html.

For your assurance to me, you may use the following language:

*Certification of Compliance with the Law on Constitutionally
Protected Prayer*

This is to certify that no policy of my school district/s prevents or otherwise denies participation in constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary and secondary schools as set forth in the "Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools," issued February 7, 2003. This certification applies to the school year 2011-12.

Please sign and date your assurance, note your district name, and fax the assurance to the attention of Elliot Krieger, at 222-6178, or e-mail it to elliott.krieger@ride.ri.gov, by the close of business **today** (October 14), or by early next week if necessary.

Thank you for your help on this matter.

4. Schools reminded to carefully monitor NECAP testing sessions

As we are about half-way through the fall 2011 NECAP testing, which concludes on October 25, I hope that the assessment process has been moving along smoothly in your schools. I want to remind you and your staff members of the importance of carefully monitoring and proctoring testing sessions. All of us want to be sure that our students are well prepared for these assessments and that we will be able to celebrate significant improvements when the results are available early next year. We also want to be sure that the NECAP assessments are a fair and accurate way for us to measure what our students know are able to do at each grade level. Especially in this age of social media and instant communication, we must take extra care to protect

against any breach of testing security, particularly during periods of test administration. Please remind your staff that active proctoring is required during the entire testing session. One practice worth noting is that some schools collect cell phones at the start of testing sessions in order to further maintain security. The staff members in our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum are always available to consult with you should any issues of test administration arise over the next two weeks.

5. Districts encouraged to select 2012 Teacher of the Year

To date, 18 districts have selected a 2012 Teacher of the Year – more participation than in recent years, but still far short of the goal of having 100-percent participation in this worthwhile program that honors the great work of our best teachers. If you have not selected a Teacher of the Year, I will be calling you within the next week or so to discuss how you can move forward with the selection process. As noted in recent field memos, we have posted a streamlined application on our Web site, which you can access here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/Recognition/default.aspx> .

From RIDE:

6. Regents schedule hearings on career-technical education regulations

The Board of Regents has scheduled four public hearings on proposed revisions to the regulations on career-technical education. The first hearing is scheduled for **Thursday** (October 20), at 5 p.m., at the Providence Career and Technical Academy,

41 Fricker St., Providence 02903. A complete list of the hearings is posted at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Regents/PublicHearings.aspx>

7. RIDE seeks waivers regarding persistently lowest-achieving schools

Please see this notice from our Transformation Office:

RIDE is requesting four waivers from the U.S. Department of Education on federal requirements for persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) schools. These waiver requests will impact only schools that have been identified as persistently lowest-achieving and the districts that support and manage them. RIDE welcomes responses or comments on the following waivers:

Waiver request 1: In order to generate new lists of Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III schools for the School Year 2011-12 School Improvement Grant (SIG) G competition, Rhode Island is requesting a waiver of paragraph (a)(2) of the definition of “persistently lowest-achieving schools” in Section I.A.3 and incorporation of that definition in identifying Tier II schools under Section I.A(b). This waiver would enable RIDE to include, in the pool of secondary schools from which it determines those that are the persistently lowest-achieving schools, secondary schools participating under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that have not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for at least two consecutive years or are in the state’s lowest quintile of performance.

Waiver request 2: In order to support PLA schools that

select and are approved to implement the “restart” school-intervention model, Rhode Island is requesting the waiving of sections III6(b)(12) of the ESEA, allowing LEAs to allow their restart schools to “start over” in the school-improvement timeline.

Waiver request 3: In order to ensure that PLA schools have maximum flexibility in effectively investing federal 1003(g) funding, Rhode Island is requesting the waiving of the 40-percent poverty eligibility threshold in section 1114(a)(1) of the ESEA. This waiver would permit LEAs to implement a schoolwide program in a Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III Title I participating school that does not meet the poverty threshold and is fully implementing one of the four school-intervention models.

Waiver request 4: In order to ensure that PLA schools have adequate time to implement their selected and approved school intervention model and utilize 1003(g) grant funds, Rhode Island is requesting a waiver of section 421(b) of the general provisions of GEPA. This waiver would extend the period of availability of the Fiscal Year 2009 carryover school-improvement funds for the SEA and all its LEAs to September 30, 2014.

RIDE welcomes all comments on these waiver requests, which can be submitted to Lauren McCarthy, at Lauren.McCarthy@ride.ri.gov. Any LEA staff interested in reviewing the full text of the Rhode Island application for 1003(g) funding should contact Lauren McCarthy.

8. Districts asked to verify list of beginning teachers by October 31 – Action Item

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

We would like to thank you for your support and patience during the Induction Coach assignments and reassignment process as the number of beginning teachers continues to grow. Currently, we have 17 Induction Coaches serving 268 beginning teachers. Induction Coach caseloads vary from 15 to 16 beginning teachers.

Shortly, we will be sending you a list that will contain the name of the Induction Coach(es) serving in your district along with the names of the beginning teachers that have been identified by your district. Please verify this list to ensure that no one has been missed.

As a reminder:

- **Wednesday (October 19)** is the next Beginning Teacher Orientation. The session will be held from 4:30 - 7:30 p.m., at the Sheraton Providence Airport Hotel, 1850 Post Rd., Warwick 02886. Only Beginning Teachers who have not attended a previous session need to attend.
- The next Role of the Principal Training is set for November 1. As in the past, there are two sessions available: one from 8:30 – 11:30 a.m. and an afternoon session from 12:30 – 3:30 p.m. It is necessary to register only for one of the two sessions.
- Please complete all beginning teacher information in Google Docs by **October 31**. After this date, we will not be able to add new hires to the Induction Program for this year. We can include them next year.

To register for the Beginning Teacher Orientation or the Role of the Principal Training, please go to:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

Registration is required as we need accurate counts for handouts.

As always, if you have any questions or feedback, do not hesitate to contact Hilda or Donna:

- Hilda Potrzeba, at hilda.potrzeba@ride.ri.gov or 222-8891
- Donna Okrasinski, at donna.okrasinski@ride.ri.gov or 222-8982

9. RIDE posts FAQs, responds to questions on educator evaluations

Please see this notice from our Office of Teacher Quality and Certification:

If your schools or your district generates a list of questions as you gradually implement educator evaluation this year, please send them directly to RIDE, at edeval@ride.ri.gov. This e-mail address is monitored, and it is designed to provide you a way to ask questions and receive timely answers.

Two new FAQ documents on evaluations are posted on our Web site. FAQs on Student Learning Objectives and a new set of FAQs for teachers can be found at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/RIModelFAQ.aspx>

10. Districts asked to develop practices, policies to capture student rosters, identify “contributing educators” for Teacher-Course-Student link – *Action Items*

RIDE is working with LEAs to build statewide capacity to collect real-time data that connects teachers to students, known as the Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) link. Establishing accurate links for the current school year is critically important to the educator-evaluation process. In order to connect this year’s learning with next fall’s NECAP data, we need to have complete and accurate student rosters for the beginning and end of this current school year. *For this year only*, RIDE will be using TCS data to calculate student growth only for the core ELA and mathematics teachers in grades 3 through 7. Student growth will *not* be calculated for other contributing educators (e.g., a history teacher who may in the future be considered to be a contributing educator for ELA) for this school year.

The capacity-building work in which RIDE, LEAs, and Student Information System (SIS) vendors are currently engaged will facilitate an automated, daily transfer of TCS data from LEAs to RIDE, beginning January 3. Beginning February 1, RIDE will require core ELA and mathematics teachers to verify their rosters for students in grades 3 through 7 who were enrolled in their classrooms as of October 1, 2011, using an updated version of the eRIDE roster-verification tool. Principals will then be required to verify and sign off on all teachers’ rosters.

Recommended action 1: We strongly recommend that **by next Friday (October 21)**, In order to ensure that these teachers and principals have a reliable data source to use as a reference when they are reviewing their rosters in February, superintendents should work with their technology directors to determine the best way to support ELA and mathematics teachers and their principals to capture an electronic or paper a copy of their class rosters as of October 1, 2011. LEAs with the capacity to do so may choose to pull these records from a central source, while others may direct teachers to make copies of grade-books, attendance sheets, or other sources listing students in their classes as of October 1. These rosters should be archived in preparation for the February roster verification.

Also beginning February 1, RIDE will work with districts to ensure that their systems are accurately capturing *all* contributing educators and to test the functionality of the SIS upgrades and the accuracy of TCS links. This process will ensure that student-growth calculations can be made correctly for all contributing educators in the future. This is also a critical milestone for the implementation of the Instructional Management System (IMS) and the Educator Performance and Support System (EPSS). In early June 2012, a final roster-verification process will take place to ensure that the end-of-year Teacher-Course-Student link is complete and accurate.

Recommended Action 2: RIDE has developed a tool to assist in the development of policies and practices for identifying contributing educators. We strongly recommend that, **by December 1**, districts should clarify their instructional model as it relates to how teachers contribute to the education of students at all school levels, which will dictate exactly which teachers will be designated as contributing educators.

RIDE's guidance for the TCS and other documents can be found at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/EducatorQuality/EducatorEvaluation/EdEvalRIGM.aspx>

RIDE will be working with districts to support the verification process and to provide additional trainings around practices that will ensure data quality throughout the Teacher-Course-Student link collection process.

For policy-related questions, please contact Mary Ann Snider, at 222-8492 or MaryAnn.Snider@ride.ri.gov.

For technical questions, please contact Elizabeth Landry, at 222-8963 or Elizabeth.Landry@ride.ri.gov.

For data-quality questions, please contact Jan Mermin, at 222-4710 or Jan.Mermin@ride.ri.gov.

Other:

11. Red Cross Instructor training available for teachers, school nurses

Please see this message from the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Red Cross:

RIDE provides a grant to train school personnel as Red Cross Instructors in First Aid (FA), Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillation (AED). This training offers your district:

- the means to fulfill the state mandate Chapter 16-22-15 and 16 of the General Laws of Rhode Island that requires certified CPR/First Aid personnel in each school at all times;
- professional development for school personnel to be certified as American Red Cross Instructors who will then be able to certify other staff, coaches, and students at your schools;
- a cost-effective way to prepare for emergencies on school property during school hours for students, staff, and visitors to your schools; and
- first-rate health-and-safety training to enhance your health-education curricula.

Successful participants will be certified as Lay Responder First Aid and CPR/AED Instructors, and they will be authorized to teach FA/CPR/AED, Sports Safety Training, and First Aid – Responding to Emergencies. New first aid components include *Epinephrine Auto-Injector Training* and an *Asthma Inhaler Training* lesson.

Instructor Training courses are scheduled monthly at the Red Cross chapter headquarters in Providence. For details visit:

www.riredcross.org. (Search by “instructor.”)

However, you can schedule this training for your district (12-hour course) at your convenience and location with a minimum guarantee of eight (8) participants. Due to the limited number of seats available for the training, it will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

Participants have the option to register for a class by completing the attached form.

If you have any questions, please contact Joyce McLaughlin by e-mail at: mclaughlinj@iredcross.org or at 831-7700 x 108.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>